

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Health-Seeking Patterns among Fatally Ill Capeverdian Women

Hans Wessel¹, Pitt Reitmaier², Alice Dupret³, Ernesto Rocha⁴, Sven Cnattingius⁵ and Staffan Bergström¹

Division of International Health (IHCAR), Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden¹; Department of Tropical Hygiene and Public Health, INF 324, University of Heidelberg, Germany²; WHO, Praia, Cape Verde³; Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Baptista da Sousa Hospital, Sao Vicente, Cape Verde⁴; Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden⁵

*For Correspondence: E-mail: memoona@uic.edu and Phone: 1-312-996-8214

Abstract

The circumstances of 94 deaths among females aged 15-49 years in Cape Verde were investigated to assess their access to effective care. Persons associated with the deceased women were interviewed (verbal autopsy) to explore contributing causes of death, perceived illnesses and treatment efforts. The certainty of diagnosis and avoidability of the fatal outcome were assessed by a panel of experts. A model of health care accessibility is elaborated to identify restricting (delay) factors. Deliberate avoidance of modern medical care and reliance on traditional medicine were major delay factors, while unawareness of the severity of symptoms and affordability limits were minor delay factors in this population. A detailed sorting of cases by health care level is used to identify the effectiveness of diagnosing, referral and care provided. Since a high proportion of avoidable deaths occurred in hospital, the quality of care may have been sub-optimal. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2004; 8[3]:176-187)

Keywords: Female mortality, cause of death, verbal autopsy, access to care, Cape Verde

References

1. Fortney JA, Susanti I, Gadalla S, Saleh S, Rogers SM and Potts M. Reproductive mortality in two developing countries. *Am J Public Health* 1986; 76: 134-138.
2. Berhane Y, Andersson T, Wall S, Byass P and Högberg U. Aims, options and outcomes in measuring maternal mortality in developing societies. *ActaObstetGynecolScand* 2000; 79(11): 968-972.
3. Wurthwein R, Gbangou A, Sauerborn R and Schmidt CM. Measuring the local burden of disease. A study of years of life lost in sub-Saharan Africa. *Int J Epidemiol* 2001; 30(3): 501-508.
4. Kalter HD, Gray HR, Black RE and Gultiano SA. Validation of post-mortem interviews to ascertain selected causes of death in children. *Int J Epidemiol* 1990; 19: 380-386.
5. Campbell O and Ronsmans C. *Verbal Autopsies for Maternal Deaths*. Geneva: WHO, Division of Family Health, 1994.
6. Anker M. The effect of misclassification error on reported cause-specific mortality fractions from verbal autopsy. *Int J Epidemiol* 1997; 26(5): 1090-1096.
7. Ronsmans C, Vanneste AM, Chakraborty J and Van Ginneken J. A comparison of three verbal autopsy methods to ascertain levels and causes of maternal deaths in Matlab, Bangladesh. *Int J Epidemiol* 1998; 27(4): 660-666.
8. Chandramohan D, Rodrigues LC, Maude GH and Hayes RJ. The validity of verbal autopsies for assessing the causes of institutional maternal death. *Stud Fam Plann* 1998; 29(4): 414-422.
9. Quigley MA, Chandramohan D and Rodrigues LC. Diagnostic accuracy of physician review, expert algorithms and vdata-derived algorithms in adult verbal v autopsy. *Int J Epidemiol* 1999; 28(6): v 108-187.
10. Kahn K, Tollman SM, Garenne M and Gear JS. Validation and application of verbal autopsies in a rural area of South Africa. *Trop Med Int Health* 2000; 5(11): 824-831.
11. Sloan NL, Langer A, Hernandez B, Romero M and Winikoff B. The etiology v of maternal mortality in developing countries: what do verbal autopsies tell us? *Bull world Health Organ* 2001; 79(9): 805-810.
12. Censos 90. 2.oRecenseamentoGeral da População e Habitação. Praia: Direcção- Geral de Estatística, 1992.
13. EIU. *Country report. Congo (Brazzaville), São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde*. London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1997.
14. Wessel H, Reitmaier P, Dupret A, Rocha E, Cnattingius S and Bergström S. Deaths among women of reproductive age in Cape Verde: causes and consequences. *ActaObstetGynecolScand* 1999; 78(3): 225-232.
15. Carreira A. *The People of the Cape Verde Islands: Exploitation and Emigration*. Translated from the Portuguese and edited by Christopher Fyfe. London: C. Hurst, 1982.
16. UN. Country presentation: Cape Verde. Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. United Nations, 1990.
17. Inquéritodemográfico e da saúde reprodutiva 1998.Praia: O Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 1998.
18. Thaddeus S and Maine D. *Too Far to Walk: Maternal Mortality in Context*. New York: Columbia University, 1990.

19. Essien E, Ifenne D, Sabitu K, Musa A, Alti-Mu'azu M, Adidu V, et al. Community loan funds and transport services for obstetric emergencies in northern Nigeria. *Int J Gynecol Obstet* 1997; 59: S237-244.
20. Hjortsberg CA and Mwkisa CN. Cost of access to health services in Zambia. *Health Policy Plann* 2002; 17(1): 71-77.
21. Karim MS. Disease pattern, health services utilization and cost of treatment in Pakistan. *J Pak Med Assoc* 1993; 43(8): 159-164.
22. Egunjobi L. Factors influencing choice of hospitals: A case of the northern part of Oyo State, Nigeria. *SocSci Med* 1983; 17: 585-589.
23. Nnadi EE and Kabat HF. Choosing health care services in Nigeria: A developing nation. *J Trop Med Hyg* 1984; 87: 47-51.
24. Kloos H. Utilization of selected hospitals, health centres and health stations in central, southern and western Ethiopia. *SocSci Med* 1990; 31(2): 101-114.
25. Odero W, Garner P and Zwi A. Road traffic injuries in developing countries: a comprehensive review of epidemiological studies. *Trop Med Inter Health* 1997; 2: 445-460.
26. Soderlund N and Zwi AB. Traffic-related mortality in industrialized and less developed countries. *Bull World Health Organ* 1995; 73: 175-182.
27. Graitcer P. Injury. In: Howson CP, Harrison PF, Hotra D and Law M (Eds.). *In Her Lifetime: Female Morbidity and Mortality in sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington DC: National Academy Press, 1996, 169-182.
28. Winston CM and Patel V. Use of traditional and orthodox health services in urban Zimbabwe. *Int J Epidemiol* 1995; 24(5): 100-612.
29. Hielscher S and Sommerfeld J. Concepts of illness and the utilization of health-care services in a rural Malian village. *Soc Sci Med* 1985; 21(4): 469-481.